

Holland Museums and sculpture

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Lee U-Fan, *Relatum*, 1979-80; (à droite): Evert Strobos, *Palissade*, 1973. Photo : Cary Markerink. Kröller-Müller Sculpture Park, Otterlo, Holland.

Holland's recent five-year Delta Plan for museum research and care of collections is on schedule. This plan, formerly the Delta Plan for dykes and dams developed to hold back the sea, is currently designed to allow Dutch museums to direct their own budgets, while redirecting any surplus funds back into facilities.

In July, 1994, with the independence of the first six national museums, including Amsterdam's Rijksmuseum, the Van Gogh Museum and Stedelijk Museum, the Enkhuizen Zuiderzee Museum, the Mauritshuis Royal Museum in Den Haag and the Kröller-Müller Museum, near Otterlo, a policy of maximum independence was put into effect. This policy is derived from the example of privatization achieved by The Netherlands Open Air Museum at Arnhem, the first museum to gain independence. This institution, in a period of predicted closure due to government budget cuts in subsidies, is now seen to be showing the way of the future for state-funded museums in The Netherlands. Privatization, due to its flexibility, allows budget allotments to remain intact, while at the same time the distribution of five year budgets have become cost effective through a self-management process.

In the Netherlands today, sponsorship is seen as the way to realize extra projects, and only long-term corporate sponsors are targeted by larger museum institutions. Holland has implemented a computerized entry system, the Museumjäärkarte, which covers over half of the more than eight

hundred museum institutions in Holland. This centre, operated by the Rabobank Caisse Populaire, issues one and a half million cards to new customers yearly while promoting sales of museum passes, from student, to family, to frequent user. In a nation whose population totals fifteen million, this centre is expected to reach an additional target audience of another two million in 1995.

Maximum access is the goal, with admission fees redistributed throughout the computerized user system to reflect individual museum attendance. Sponsored programmes at the Rijksmuseum include restoration, renovation, family programmes, and a family lecture series. Since 1949, educational policy in Amsterdam schools has required actual museum attendance six times during the school calendar for all eleven and twelve year olds. Currently this program targets the children of new immigrant families, in an attempt to familiarize them with Dutch cultural traditions.

In terms of museums, there has never been a time when more capital has been made available for museums in the Netherlands. More museums are being built, refurbished, or expanded. The metaphor is that of the museum as the generator of culture, as is witnessed by new museums under construction at the Groningen and Maastricht Museums. These centres are attracting the public through new exhibition approaches, from the Stedelijk Amsterdam's "Couplet" rotations, to the

Den Haag's Mauritshuis Museum's sky-lit ceiling viewing into rooms below the court-yard entrance. The latter, interestingly, permits the public to view restorations for the important commemorative year Vermeer exhibition.

Museums in the Netherlands, aware of their past and their present, are in a process of renewal, assessing contemporary values against a "Golden Age" past. At the same time, the memory of more lavish artist programmes from earlier, affluent socialist policies fades. Since 1987, Ministry of Culture reductions, privatization, and the control of funding budgets outside the ministry, have also resulted in the curtailing of larger itinerant curatorial projects.

With the model of the Mondriaan Foundation of 1994, and the success of the earlier Van Gogh Foundation, both under the direction of Mr. Frits Becht, today there is virtually a funding foundation behind every discipline, with project management networks making decisions about artist awards, funding abroad, acquisitions and catalogues. The Foundation of the Visual Arts provides cohesive grants toward individual artist projects in Holland with a continuity allowing for distinct, dynamic Dutch museum and gallery programming that is remarkable for both intensive research and coherent content.

Throughout the Netherlands, special exhibitions and events in contemporary art, dance, poetry, music and theatre were held throughout the 50th anniversary of Mon-



drian's death. In centres where Mondriaan had lived and practiced, exhibitions and events were scheduled, for example the exhibition of work by the artist's father and uncle in the Piet Mondriaan birthplace in Amersfoort. This recently renovated historic site and research centre also houses a contemporary gallery and an art publication house in association with the University of Utrecht.

New Collections and New Venues

At the Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, exhibitions planned prior to the 1996 opening of an expansion included solo exhibitions of new work, featuring works acquired by the collection since 1989. These include works by Didier Vermeiren, James Coleman, Mirosław Balka, Marcel Broodthaers, Rodney Graham, Hanne Darboven, Marlene Dumas, and Rebecca Horn.

Montreal benefitted from links with the Netherlands through the exhibition of work by Pieter Laurens Mol at the Centre d'art Saidye Bronfman in August 1994. This show was organized by curator and acting director Frank Lubbers. *One Room*, an installation piece by Christina Iglesias, and Mark Mander's *Provisional Floorplan Self Portrait as a Building* were featured at the Van Abbemuseum, while Manders' solo exhibition *The Practice*, and Geneviève Cadieux's *Summer of Photography* were shown at Antwerp's Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst. Reciprocally, Eindhoven, with its two artist-run centres, Appolohuis and de Fabriek, is a venue familiar to Quebec artists.

The De Pont Museum, near Eindhoven at Tilburg, is a somewhat more isolated and newer venue, transformed from a former Textile Fabriek in 1988. It was opened in 1992 through a private endowment initiative by Jong De Pont to favour and stimulate contemporary art. Gallery director Driesen exhibits work by a selected group of artists from its growing international collection, presenting two or three major solo exhibitions and an average of four smaller group exhibitions per year. An exhibition held between October 22, 1994 and February 12, 1995 featured recent work by Vancouver artist Jeff Wall. While the De Pont offers large open space, some of the earlier "wool storage room" divisions have

been preserved for site-specific work created for the collection.

Tilberg is easily reached from Rotterdam, known for its many contemporary artist-run centres and galleries, and as home to the Kunsthal Rot-

terdam. Located as well in Rotterdam is the Boymans-Van Beuningen, with its contemporary and modern art sculpture gardens and the recently opened Kunsthal en Architectuurmuseum (Art Gallery and Architecture Museum). The 1994 Witte de With exhibition of installations by William Oerbeek is being presented at the Winnipeg Art Gallery in 1995.

The Kröller Müller Museum and Sculpture Park

Across The Netherlands, the 50th anniversary of the death of Mondriaan inspired exhibitions and festivals in dance, music, theatre and poetry. The Kröller Müller Museum, Otterlo, displayed some 200 works by the artist Bart van der Leek, in a retrospective displaying the versatility of Mondriaan's symbiotic contemporary through drawings, paintings, design, ceramic and stained glass. Van der Leek, using primary colors, is known as an applied artist in his development of Utopian models for the fusion of art and society.

The most remarkable grounds and collection of international contemporary and modern sculpture in Holland is, undoubtedly, the Kröller Müller Museum and national park at Otterlo. The collection originated circa 1909, at which time Mme Kröller-Müller, whose motto was "mind and matter are one", began to commission work by artists sharing her idealist, abstract vision. The actual buildings, some twenty years in their conception, were created with somewhat limited means in the late 1930's based on the austere and modest design of Belgian architect Henry Van de Velde. The museum, whose design embodies the union of art and architecture in an open-air, "pilgrimage" setting, was built to house the collection of industrialist Anton Kröller and his wife Helene Müller. While the collection originated with works of Van Gogh it increasingly integrated early Cubism and the work of de Stijl. Mondriaan was also central, occupying a position as a symbol of the balance between emotion and reason. The collection, donated to the state in 1920, also includes important work by Van der Leek, as well as several exquisite and rare works by Seurat. Subsequent acquisitions favoured works by artists conscious of the function of art in society. Utopian models were repre-

sented in the extreme through works by Bruce Nauman. Recent acquisitions include pieces by Matt Melechan, who incorporates virtual reality in the building of metaphorical cities, demonstrating a kinship with the utopian ideals of de Stijl concerning the fusion of art and life. The collection aims to continue to acquire works by artists for whom this fusion is of primary importance.

For this centre, one focus since the 1960's has been the development of an extraordinary collection of contemporary sculpture, linking past and present, with a sculpture garden that unifies the landscape, the former grounds and the horizon. Located within the historic Hoge Veluwe National Park, on former hunting grounds, the natural beauty of the park and sculpture areas may be visited during a tour on bicycles provided at the park entrance. In a complex of areas extending over 21 acres, works created *in situ* for the sculpture garden, sculpture park, and sculpture forest include Dubuffet's *Jardin d'email*, 1972-73, Serra's *Spin Out*, 1972, *Five Columns* by Hamilton Finlay and Penone's *Faggio di Otterlo*. Through these works, some of humanity's innermost expressions engage in a continuous dialogue with nature.

New realities challenge the museum to maintain an autonomous existence, with attendance by five hundred thousand visitors a year. Twenty per cent of its budget is raised in admissions and sales, while eighty per cent of its income is assured. Exhibition and acquisition budgets allow for two major exhibitions yearly, with a summer program centred around the permanent collection and open storage section. In the 1920's the foundation was created; the collection was donated to the state in return for maintenance of the buildings and grounds. This arrangement remains intact. Two new foundations were established in 1994 to administer the museum and grounds, allowing for co-ownership of the collection by both the foundation and state. Protected by the Delta Plan, this provides each party with an option to sell in the future, if necessary, in order to assure the preservation of the collection.

Heart of Darkness, an international exhibition of recent sculpture, presented work by artists who had conscientiously moved from one culture to another, (France from Ireland, Palestine to London, China to The Netherlands, etc.). The exhibition ran from December 1994 to April 1995 and included both interior and exterior installations incorporating an event of Chinese fireworks. A spring 1995 exhibition of work by Theo van Doesburg, from the collection, is to be followed by Jean Marc Bustamente from April to November 1995. In July, 1995, the complete museum collection will be presented, organized by Charley Toorop and the Loes van der Horst project. ■

Sculpture by Martha Pan, 1961. Polyester. H.: 2,13 m. Photo: Cary Markerink. Kröller Müller Sculpture Park, Otterlo, Holland.